

The Science of Tradition (Hadith) Discussed by Imam al-Baqir(A.S.)

The Ima`m discussed several sciences, and then he taught them to the scholars in the Mosque of the Prophet or in the yard of his house. Among these traditions are the following:

The Tradition

Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, took great care of the traditions which were reported on the authority of his grandfather, the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, and on the authority of his pure grandfathers, peace be on them.

That is because the tradition is the second source of the Islamic law after the Holy Koran. It is of great importance in the Islamic law, for it specifies the general (verses) of the Book, limits its absolute (verses), it distinguishes its abrogated (verses) from its abrogating (ones), and its vague (verses) from its clear (ones).

The tradition also denotes the jurisprudential rules concerning worships and dealings. It gives the general rules which the jurists use to conclude the religious opinion. It has bright rules for individual and social behavior. It has rules for organizing the family and preserving it from committing sins.

Moreover, it has all what people need for their individual and social life. For this reason, Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, took care of tradition and adopted it positively. Ja`bir b. Yazid al-Ju'fi reported seventy thousand traditions on the authority of the Ima`m. Aba`n b. Taghlab reported a large group of them on his authority. Great figures from the Companions reported a large group of traditions on his authority.

The important thing is that Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, took care of understanding the meanings of the tradition. He regarded understanding the meanings of the tradition as a criterion for preferring the narration. Yazid al-Razza`z reported on the authority of his father on the authority of Abu` Abd Allah on the authority of his father, who said:

Know the positions of the Shi'ites according to their narration and their knowledge. Indeed knowledge is understanding the narration. Through understanding the narration, the believer reaches the maximum degree of belief. I looked at a letter that belonged to 'Ali. I found in the letter that the value and importance of the person depend on that he should know that Allah will reckon people according to the reason He has given to them in the world.

[\(Nasikh al-Tawarikh, vol. 2, p. 219\)](#)

That the narrator understands the meanings of the narration indicates his high scientific rank.

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As the Ima`m took great care of the tradition, he put certain rules to distinguish the correct tradition from the incorrect one when they contradict each other. We will mention that when we talk about the science of the fundamentals which the Ima`m treated.

The Reports of the Ima`ms

As for the traditions which were reported on the authority of the pure Ima`ms, peace be on them, they do not denote the personal ideas of the Ima`ms. Rather, they denote the words of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and his ideas. Thus, the Shi'ites have added the Ima`ms' traditions to the sunna (practices of the Prophet). Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, referred to that in two traditions he told Ja`bir b. Yazid al-Ju'fi.

1. He, peace be on him, said to Ja`bir: "If we speak to you according to our idea, we will be from the perished. However, we speak to you according to the traditions we gather on the authority of the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, as they gather their gold and silver.[\(Nasikh al-Tawarikh, vol. 2, p. 217\)](#)

2. He, peace be on him, said to Ja`bir: "By Allah, Ja`bir, if we speak to the people according to our opinion, then we will be from the perished. However, we speak to them according to the traditions we report on the authority of the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family. We inherit the traditions successively. We gather them as they gather their gold and silver.

[\(Nasikh al-Tawarikh, vol. 2, p. 217\)](#)

Therefore, the Ima`ms of the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, did not ascribe the traditions to themselves. Rather they ascribed them to their grandfather, the Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. Thus, it is they who preserved the Prophet's scientific heritage. In other words they gathered it as the people gathered their gold and

silver.

The Traditions of Ima`m al-Ba`qir

As for the traditions which Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, reported on the authority of his grandfather, Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, and on the authority of Ima`m ('Ali), the Commander of the Faithful, peace be on him, they are of two kinds:

1. (Aha`dith) mursala; they are the traditions which the Ima`m recorded without mentioning the chain of the narrators. The Ima`m attributed the tradition directly to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or Ima`m ('Ali), the Commander of the Faithful, peace be on him. The Ima`m, peace be on him, was asked about the chain (of the narrators), he said:

"When I report a tradition, I do not mention the chain (of the reporters), for I report it on the authority of my father, Zayn al-'Abidin, on the authority of his father al-Husayn, the martyr, on the authority of his father, 'Ali b. Abu` Ta`lib, on the authority of the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, on the authority of Gabriel, on the authority of Allah, the Great and Almighty.¹

2. (Aha`dith) musnada; they are the traditions which the Ima`m recorded on the authority of his pure grandfathers on the authority of the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family.

Whether the Ima`m's traditions are mursala or musnada, they are proof with the Shi'ites without difference. That is if the chain (of the narrators who reported) on his authority is correct; otherwise they are treated like the other traditions that may be weak or reliable or acceptable.